

OXFORD POETRY
1928

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Edited

With a Plea for Better Criticism

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A PLEA FOR BETTER CRITICISM

HERE, Critic, is the harvest of OXFORD POETRY for 1928. We have gathered and bound it; 'tis for you to appraise it. Will you but cast a glance of your expert eye over our tender crop and dismiss it from your attention with some routine formula of gratulation or contempt? Or can we hope that you will sift and judge the grain, if grain there be? We do not shrink from a threshing, nor resent the winnowing blast of criticism however searching it may prove. Rather we would provoke it, believing that for a young poet sound criticism is the best, if not the only, reward (*pace* our publisher) he can look to win. But can we hope? At least we can provoke.

Nothing in the world of letters is more noticeable at the present time than the paucity of good poetry, unless it be the paucity of good criticism.

The Georgian movement, which was in reality the swan-song of Victorian poetry, incurred the admiration of the great public of 'poetry-readers' and 'lovers of verse' not so much because of its own merits, which were slender, but for two other reasons: in the first place because little intellectual effort was required to understand these lyrical outbursts; secondly, because the war, by providing a common background to thoughts and emotions, further accentuated the time-honoured worship of romantic geography by colouring it with the hues of patriotism. The tendency to intellectual laziness on the part of the public was still further encouraged by the growth of the anthology habit, by which means a

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choice of simple and easy pieces were flung together so that he who ran might read.

In the years that have followed the new books of important poetry may be numbered upon one hand. From the Georgian attitude there followed a reaction to what may be termed 'intellectuosity' on the part of the more noticeable poets. This intellectuosity may indeed have its vices, but it is at least provocative of thought, and it has in consequence proved refreshing to readers weary of the Georgian milk-and-soda. We do not intend, however, to analyse its ingredients here.

We would enquire firstly why there is so little good poetry, and secondly, why there is so little good criticism of poetry (or why such good criticism as there is should be so inaccessible)? The most obvious retort would seem to be that quality is always rare. So much must be granted. But it is also pertinent to draw attention to Mr. Philip Guedalla's observation that the best literary intellect of the younger generation tends toward subjects in which prose is the medium employed. For this inclination a multitude of reasons may be offered: 'poetry cannot deal with the ugliness of modern life; poetry cannot deal adequately with the most absorbing subjects of the day, which demand scientific analysis, etc., etc.' Such considerations are, of course, in some cases eminently reasonable, although it seems to us that the argument about 'beauty' and 'modern life' must be met with suspicion. Nor will we allow the contention that the decay of criticism derives from the decay of Poetry. Rather we maintain the reverse. If a man

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is not shown his faults, how shall he mend them? If his merits are not recognized, being human, how shall a Poet persevere? Is it not yours to guide us from the slough and set our feet aright? There are not wanting signs that such a need is already felt. The snobbery of some literary critics with regard to 'accepted' authors is, fortunately, widely recognized, but their frequent superficiality, their *incompetence*, their obviously unsympathetic (and by unsympathetic we would indicate not necessarily unfavourable attitudes but indifference to the aims and purposes the writer may have in view) and no less obviously *cursor*y attention, their irrelevant remarks, their infelicitous attempts at humour, and their slick banalities, which they would nowadays so often pass off as 'literary criticism'—these should not be allowed to continue unrebuked.

For *pari passu* with the decay of criticism has dwindled the authority and value of Reviews. Seemingly in that world of affairs of which we dreamers as yet know little the great men who acquire newspapers as we used to collect cigarette cards, justly recognizing that Books are the Cinderella of commerce, hardly tolerate the intrusion of Literature among more lucrative interests, and prefer to reserve 'Drama' and 'Epic' to spice the trivial announcements in their headlines and posters.

No wonder if under such masters the Reviewer, grudgingly rewarded, adopts Protean habits, and multiplies with adroit variants his hasty judgments in half a dozen papers.

Critic, have we provoked you? Throw away the other

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five review copies of our aspirant verse, honest (we assure you) if poor, and read the sixth in the hope of enjoyment. Then assume your trenchant pen and set yourself

To tell us frankly of our foulest faults

To laugh at our vain words and vainer thoughts.

(Good Dryden, condone our variants!)

But remember we look to you for guidance!

The hungry sheep look up . . .

CLERE PARSONS.

B.B.

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G. C. ALLEN

LATE AFTERNOON

THE shadows on the sunny grass
Lengthen as the late hours pass,
And drowsy sunbeams seem to fold
The meadows in a mist of gold:

But soon the sad dusk will destroy
The shadows and the sunlit joy,
When the sunbeams vanishing
Leave but a memory of spring.

For the sunlight that death kissed
Is shrouded in a winter's mist;
And the way that leads to home
Will be unlit and wearisome.

The drowsy sunbeams will soon be
Dead to eyes that cannot see,
When the watcher has passed on
To his own oblivion:

Daybreak may never pass beneath
The impenetrable cloud of death.
And yet the sunbeams are all made
More beautiful because they fade.

W. H. AUDEN

IN DUE SEASON

I N Spring we waited. Princes felt
Through darkness for unwoken queens;
The itching lover weighed himself
At stations on august machines,

And Jacob fled down passages
Before those shambling feet which came
Still nearer, splintering doors. They fought,
Rucked hams, before he told his name.

Then Summer hid the grass. We sang
Our descant until love one day,
That pedal-entry in the fugue
Roared in, swept soul and knees away.

October had its casuistry.
The robin on the fallen spade
Saw eyelashes upon close flesh,
The nice distinctions lust had made.

Pockets, not hair, glue fingers now;
To lovers trespassing alone,
The rusty chains of creaking gates
Cry in the hand the cool of bone.

The sunset pours contempt upon
The choking sticks. Was Cressid fair?
Shall pages lose their meaning now
For steps approaching on the stair?

JOCELYN BROOKE

FOR A LADY ON A HORSE

HOW arrogantly
the sunlight of this February forenoon
spreads its broad sheaves
of lucent brightness
over these flooded fields
(gilding their silver mirrors,
emerald enshrined
with what premature summerstolen gold!)

*here we may ride, you
and I
the sun is on your hair, and you
have pinned the shivering
early primroses to your
coat . . . the pale, nude flowers
that I
picked for you.*

here we may ride, my dear,
till we are tired . . .
alone with these
stark skeletons of trees
gaunt hedges
and gesticulating clouds.

JOCELYN BROOKE

EN BATEAU

I

TH E silver threads
of birdsongs dart and quiver
in wet lilac trees
like music by Ravel. How calm
this transient day!

The stream
immaculate, mirrors the green of elms, the sky's
fierce blue.

And now the rich
laugh of a boy bare-armed,
bare-throated,
falls on the perishable stillness, falls
on the golden air
like pebbles flung in silent pools.

II

The grating whine
of gramophones excites
the ravished silence.

Now a faint
rumour of thunder stirs
in the curtained west,

and rain
murmurs among the lilacs.

Once again
a boy laughs brokenly

this is the end.

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL
DESPAIR THE DIPLOMAT

DESPAIR,
stalks honesty,
like a lady's companion in long black gloves,
playing the private detective for convention.

Despair,
catches the throat,
like yellow chlorine,
playing blind man's buff with a Tommy,
in a flooded shell-hole.

Despair
frizzles the soul
as a flame frizzles feathers,
leaving charred shipwrecks of former quill.

Despair
travels incognito,
with the passport of action.
'He builds to destroy,
and destroys to build.'
He is like a fried whiting on a plate.
Rome burnt, he walks with exaggerated circumspection
as by the deathbed of a rich aunt.
Most false when true,
most true when false.
Blaspheming sorrow, he hypocriticises at the funeral.
A motor hearse from the undertaker who buried Sir R.
Backshell's
morganatic sister-in-law.

DESPAIR THE DIPLOMAT

Mausolus nor Nephertiti
had finer exsequies than Sammy Soul.

Waving a crêped hand to Sammy
in the Blue train to Valhalla,
Despair sighs, leaning upon his umbrella
and brushing Roman dust from his pantaloon.

ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL

TO A SUMERIAN NECKLET IN THE
BRITISH MUSEUM

SO, orphan necklet, now you do not stir,
but droop on frigid neck of polish'd wax;
you who once whirled a saraband in Ur,
pulsing with that vivacity that cracks
lover and love.

In eunuch's paradise,
half-jazzing with a moribund vitality,
you corpse upon time's gibbet, advertise
us mortals with your slogan of Mortality.

About your poorly-mounted majesty
stand cow-faced women ruminating sales,
blind to the blue of lapis lazuli
boasting the cheapness of their farthingales.

Ah no! Mortality has not the sufferings,
that lapis lazuli to necklet brings.

NORMAN CAMERON

CENTRAL EUROPE

FOR them, despite their Margraves and their flag,
The inland years—fat peasants winterbound,
Stunned by the heat of their enormous stoves,
Whimpering fear of baleful gods and wolves—
Have set a bloody darkness in their souls.
Still they can see, fixed in the dark-red haze
Of swimming particles, the forest-faces,
Come, following the deeper shade, to town.

They need a wind bringing up gulls and salt,
Sailors and nabobs with new foreign gifts,
To blow each cranny free of ancient fear.

NORMAN CAMERON

THE VOYAGE TO SECRECY

TH E morn of his departure, men could say
‘Either by such a way or such a way,’
And, a week later, still, by plotting out
The course of all the roadways round about,
‘In these some score of places he may be.’
How many days the voyage to secrecy?
Always the milestones by the road hark back
To whence he came, and those in idleness
Can bound his range with map and compasses.

When shall their compasses strain wide and crack,
And alien milestones, with strange figures,
Baffle the sagest of geographers?

NORMAN CAMERON

FIGHT WITH A WATER-SPIRIT

MANY strong men had passed the ford, nor known
The presence of that jeering water-ghost
Denying their true conquest of the stream;
But I, who saw him smile behind a stone,
Stopped, challenged him to justify his boast.
Then came the fight, exhausting as a dream,
With stuff not quite impalpable. He sank,
Sighing, at last, in a small shrinking pile;
But the victorious pæan changed to fright,
To see once more the pale curve of his flank,
There in the water, and his endless smile
Broaden behind the stone. No use to fight;
Better to give the place a holy name,
Go on with less ambition than I came.

R. M. J. CAMPBELL

SERENA AND SELINA

TH E dull, the insolent, the great
Perambulate.
Serena, animate and fair,
From this high chair,
With her translucent eyes surveys
The world's light haze,
And on her lovely face is writ
As on illuminated scroll,
'Content, unmoved, unpained I sit,
Friends, for I have no soul.'

The bird, the setter and the mouse
Carouse.
Selina, feline, unperturbed,
All milky longings curbed,
Outshines the sweetness of Serena's eyes
More richly wise,
And, cushioned, purifies her fur,
Suggesting with her tongue's red roll;
'Content, unmoved, unpained I purr,
Sister, I have no soul.'

J. R. V. COLLIN

INVOCATION FOR OLD AGE

WE were life's jealous drunkards. We awake
To share the unspilt dregs
Alone with Silence, our last reveller.

Lovers whose lips are hers,
Each dusk, remorseful for his wasted sheaves,
Echo our bitterness.

We that wooed midnight in dim caves have heard her :
Gigantic silence poisoning her viewless tides
To overwhelm our rocks, or patient win
By sweet continual converse their cold heart.

Ere through the streets of its unquiet city
Blood's tolling bell shall summon her, and cease,
This guardian thought with froth of words will hold her,
These fragile sounds once cargoes with ripe song
Give back in toil across the cloudy years
Their golden captive slaves of memory.

But they have shrunk forgotten, or have foundered,
Like derelict moons, upon a dawn-still sea.

J. R. V. COLLIN

REVERIE (BY THE STILL POOL)

HOW drowse on wine-gold peace her shadow-
haunted
Meadows, whose dark eyes mourn for dusk, whose hair
Bends gleaming only to frail touch of wind
Or cloud's swift footfall.

So still, so pure, this lover of the sky,
That you would think for pity the warm boughs,
With their caressing fingers,
Had carved her to its likeness,
In cool tranquillity, grave as a child,
To whom sleep whispers secrets.

Song will not wake her now; nor petal falling,
Warm from the flower-stained hands of sunrise, bring
Her shame; nor any errant, magic, shower,
With spell of slender swallows, stooping, bending,
Eager as wind above a leaf's slow fall,
Trace laughter on her lips. Too many years
The squadroned reeds have watched their pale repose,
Until behind those hanging tresses she
Hides now no heart for wanton moon to stir.

MARY CROZIER

LARK AND SONATA

THIS is the borderland between the heaven
Of the lark's song; and of that other, even,
Smooth, and melodious, the divine sonata:
Which, as I stand between conflicting songs,
Pours out its deep, fine notes like magic leaven.
—An undertone of thoughtful, meaning sound,
To check him as he flutters from the ground,
And then to join with him along the scale,
And presently to part, and sing against him.
Till, once, the amazing unison is found,
And then they sing together; mounting, light
Cascade of notes, like music taken flight.
But still their songs in essence are apart—
One music's born of joy, and one of thought,
The lark sings of the day, sonata, night.

MARY CROZIER

SONNET

NOW is the time for watching; time to sit,
Tired, yet waiting with an eager mind
Here in the dark,—the lamps being not yet lit—
And look out at the night. A little wind,
Aimless, for it has lost its daylight guides,
Buffets the trees; a wave that breaks in vain
Against a sombre rock; then over-rides

Its ragged bulk, and winning, rears its mane.
So do the looming outlines of the trees
Assume a menace and a mighty power,
Till they are rustled as the night-cooled breeze
Goes rushing through their masses; like a flower
The leaves turn back against the pale green sky,
Silver and shining, till the small winds die.

JON CURLING
SIESTA AT THE SUPER

ESCAPE from the macadam pedestrian recap-
itulation of I believe this, from the recip-
rocal invest-
ive and conject-
ure of eminent scholars and fools
whose wise stupidity cools
the radiators of once effervescing
warmth in fresh-
men: escape from this panelled distressing
verbiaged and-as-it-was-in-the-beginning-is-now-and-
er-shall-be hall. Escape, refresh- [ev-
ments call, escape. Refresh
indigestible dull matutinal nev-
er genuine morality and wisdomdusty throats with cof-
fee milk, shy illumination chif-
fonned in cigarette blue wiry periwig of smoke. The caf-
é is chaf-
ering with delicate, proper con-
trast to the rauc-
ous squawking don
of yesterminute, tongues. Cwplym-
bals! and
the band bangs up our your their voic-
es humming now now scream-
ing now no then wailing now rejoic-
ing now marionetteskipping piano, now dream-
ing now

trickling behind on into their your our
saying why you and do I

SIESTA AT THE SUPER

hate women liking daf-
fodils however and para-
doxically. What is the dif-
ference? You might as well love para-
keets and men, equally incon-
gruous. I do and who
is that rather pleasant face? *Syn-*
copate—oh what—*syn, syn synco syn*
syncopopo syn—is—*syn synco*
opopopation—this they're play-
ing? What were you say-
ing oh yes that but why
does everyone gaze so int-
erestedly here at everyone so int-
erested also in what they you I
look like. Is it
the mirrors, blur marbled lightwinking and
not
noticed until quietly to us introduced and
variegatecoloured walls? Is it
the metro-
nome of Persian Rosebud's too regular beat or
the metro-
politan sophistic love thy neighbour a
good deal better than thou
should idea, in-
duced by univers-
al almost, almost in-
voluntarily voluntary self-division of the univers-
ity's men male undergrad-
uates at little too crowded elbow-pressed tables

SIESTA AT THE SUPER

from the frump or superficial facially brains or nothing undergraduettes? The Super
Sometimes I'm is a *happy*, *sometimes I'm* nice
Blue place for *my* *dis-*
position the eleven o'clock *dis-*
sipation depends on May we have our
bill please *you* Yes
Three choc-
olate biscuits, *Sometimes I'm*
Let's knock
off now *happy* this *replitititit*—
ioned tune is too sug-
gestive of the inenar-
rably approved on oc-
casion hail fellow too well met and con-
found it I don't mind if it is oc-
cidental and disgusting to con-
ventional con-
genital fools' out-
look on what is out-
wardly negrothought and in-
wardly delightful but on-
ly permissible in-
wardly on
alternate Thursdays like food rarejoys, out-
wardly on
invisible occasions like liqueurs at a
nice bar,
when the souldisturbing cave canem cry is not atta
Progs.

JON CURLING

CYNICS' OLD MASTERS FOR SALE

LAUGHTER of God sadly distressing
Leavedroppers straining at keyholes dusty with blue
speculation madly caressing
 portraits of God
framed in the guilt of anthropomorphic banality
signed with the flourish of mystical saint's sensuality
dulled by the stains of unpenetrated finality
 museum of odd
 portraits of God
gods' incarnations God's incarnations
God's revelations gods' revelations
 idols like men man that is idol
 idols of tree idol on tree nailed
 till sages
trampling high ages
brandish their water stoups smells genuflexions
parthenogenesis incense collections
for those who have not
seen the light while they
 proselytize
 supermundanely wise
green connoisseurs of the portraits of God.

JON CURLING

STREET

NIGHT

White
To us having burst cinema exit:
Strange
Change
From solecisms, eyes, revolvers, sex. It
Seems
(Streams
Of facial platitudes bump by grinning)
That
Fat
Mammose women, past the age of sinning,
In
Thin
Black satine coats and striped, flowered dresses,
Fly
By,
Hot with nips of port, string bags, caresses
Of
Men.
When
We look between shouldered shapes of matrons,
We
See
Tall tight-hatted women seeking patrons
By
Eye
Of white disdain or rude ruddy laughter
—Adown titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong feet that followed, followed after.

A. S. T. FISHER
FROM A LETTER ABROAD

LAURENCE, were you in England now
You'd see the spring come tiding slow,
And leave, betraying she has been,
A lovely adolescent green
On faces of the fields and bushes.
From under heavy hedgerow lashes
Wetted by idle passing rains
Blink little curving country lanes,
And over all a haze there is
Suggestive of regeneration.

Weaned now are buds the winter nursed,
Bulbs, bubble-like, unfreeze and burst
In show more wanton than advised;
But spring was never canonized,
And country-parson notices
The rake's progress of crocuses—
'Gay, debonair, polished and piquant'
At their beginning, but too frequent
Indulgence with the dew doth pass
To gay debauchery in the grass.
How different are aconites,
In their green ruffs like acolytes,
So innocently leading in
The bulbous riot of scented sin!—

The snowdrop, crocus, daffodil,
Hyacinth, narcissus, and bluebell,
The tulip cold and cavernous,

FROM A LETTER ABROAD

So monocotyledonous
In its apparent chastity
And dark deeps of depravity!

In the old wall the queen wasp wakes,
Sleep from each spiracle she shakes
And heavy her abdomen hangs
With poison for a thousand pangs;
And in among the warming bricks
She chews to pulp dry splintered sticks
To paper all the monast'ry
Of cells for her striped progeny.
The Chaffinch tries his bit of song,
But, out of practice, gets it wrong,
Reiterating to improve
Its climax for the sake of love;
And serving-maids, each with their mate,
Lengthen adieus outside the gate.

A.S.T. FISHER

AT THE FUNERAL OF
THOMAS HARDY

WESTMINSTER ABBEY, JAN. 16

(For B.T. who could not be there.)

I

WAITING

WAITING an hour to honour sparkless
Ashes of him in his flame's stead,
And hear the last word said,
There comes upon the silent starkness
From where the pillars leap to darkness
Noising of rainfall on the lead,
Like voices of the dead.

II

AFTERWARDS

Sightseer, priest, and mourner
Have left the dead alone,
And in the poet's corner
Effigies, one by one—
Chilled to the marble bone—
Stir, ease cramped limbs and moan
'All flesh to dust, and poets to stone.'

A . S . T . F I S H E R

INVITATION TO DROWNING

DO but mistake this water for your breath,
And wide-armed dive into the deeps of death;
For never deeps of sea
Charge burial fee.

Would you have tapers burning, the long night?
Here phosphorescent fish go cabined with light;
Further!—the Seafan's fire
Burns as a pyre.

To pay the last attentions to your flesh
Are ministers more curious and more fresh
Than priests with prayer-book terms
And churchyard worms:

Fish, gaping in perpetual surprise
Ooze-anchored polyps, creatures with stalked eyes,
Athene-born from skulls
Of china dolls.

Like gaudies shaken from a Christmas tree,
The endless Foraminifera rain shall be
For ocean-earth to cover
Your stilled bones over.

PHYLLIS HARTNOLL

THE LEAF AND THE WIND

AT dead of night
a little leaf,
that walked alone
down a silent street

driven by a wind
so slight, so invisible,
that only the leaf
could tell it was near.

A little leaf
that talked alone,
rustling along
down a silent street

talking so quietly,
whispering so softly,
that only the wind
was able to hear.

PHYLLIS HARTNOLL

(‘Voici que les jardins de la Nuit vont fleurir.’ — *Samain*)

LORSQUE le jour s'éteint le jardin solitaire
Qui a chanté au grand soleil, semble se taire
Pour écouter venir la Nuit au front voilé,
Trainant sur le ciel clair son manteau étoilé.
Elle tient dans ses mains des pavots, fleurs du rêve;
Pour l'annoncer de loin le vent du soir s'élève,
Et son souffle léger fait passer un frisson
Sur les grands arbres noirs qui bordent le gazon.
Sous son premier baiser les fleurs du jour, lassées,
Se ferment, en rêvant lentement balancées.
Les papillons s'en vont, et les phalènes d'or,
Autour de la fontaine ou l'eau calme s'endort,
Voltigent en silence; et les nénuphars roses
Ferment sur un cœur d'or leurs pétales écloses
Sous l'ardeur du soleil. Lent et mystérieux
Le crépuscule vient, effacent les couleurs,
Et le jardin n'a plus son visage ordinaire.
C'est un endroit secret, plein d'ombre et de mystère,
C'est un coin enchanté qu'on ne reconnaît plus.
Tout est silencieux; les oiseaux se sont tus,
Las d'avoir tant chanté. Mais brisant le silence,
Près de l'arbre ou son nid, lentement, se balance,
Un rossignol plaintif chante son désespoir.
Des parfums inconnus embaument l'air du soir.
L'ombre est partout; le monde est couvert de ses voiles.
Dans le ciel assombri s'allument les étoiles;
Et quand la lune pâle arrive enfin sans bruit
Je vois soudain fleurir le jardin de la Nuit.

CHRISTOPHER HOLME

SEBASTIAN

SEBASTIAN knows the half-forgetful stammer
Of light that crowds the lattice of the trees,
Where, up above, a soft and fetid clamour
Of insect-swarms infest their darkened frieze.

Sebastian feels, when over this long inch
Of masonry the wrinkled shadow falls,
The sun is winding up his golden winch
And changes down, as in the music-halls

To purple second, and Sebastian sees
The bitter conference of naked boughs
Rejoicing in the unfrequented lees
Of day, contemptuous of the sodden cows.

CHRISTOPHER HOLME

SONG, FROM *THE MERMAID
TAVERN*

‘**Y**O U think you know the universal best,
And with full heads
You sink your tired “utterly” to rest
In fireside reds.

‘You ripen in contented affluence
Of ended purpose,
And do not wish to know in what hard sense
Life can usurp us.

‘I wonder and I doubt, and do the thing
Which, once rejected,
I now approve, and to confession bring,
Finely dissected,

‘A conscience purple with uncertainty,
And hope with prayer,
Fool, to avert a consequence I see
But cannot fear.’

C. J. PENNETHORNE HUGHES

ECCENTRIC

ALONE he sat, far into the night,
Staring at words, and eating cheese;
His mind, vasty and unpacked,
With lumbered thoughts and printed things was
stacked.

There came the morn, the sun, the light,
Staring at cheese, and eating words
Alone he sat, poor man, he sat.
And at the door came a rat-a-tat-tat,
They brought him cheese and words.
He sat, digesting them, another night,
Another day. Quite old and flat,
Staring at words and eating cheese,
Far through the night, alone he sat
For nights and days. Alone he sat
Staring at words and eating cheese.

LOUIS MACNEICE

READING BY CANDLE-LIGHT

I

I HAVE no clock yet I can hear
The minutes pass while I sit here,
Tired but free from tedium,
And mark the waning cylinder.

To-morrow will be another day
And to-day will then be yesterday
To click the bonds of business
From Saturday to Saturday.

Another night will follow but
My candle will then be a candle butt
And the door that is day and day's division
Will have opened once and shut.

Slam your armoured books and mark
The waning cylinder that drips
Fluid time from pallid lips

Making an island in the dark:
This island is too small, I fear;
Dark horses fret away the shore
And I can build no break-water
But only close a desperate ear
And mark the waning cylinder.

READING BY CANDLE-LIGHT

II

The candle in his white grave-clothes
always turning his cowled head
Stood in his own shadow
at the foot of my grave-bed.

'Ho,' said the candle with his rich dark beard

'How they howl like the dead,'

And wagging his cowled head

'Ho,' said the candle, 'they would make a body
afeared.'

LOUIS MACNEICE

GLASS FALLING

TH E glass is going down. The sun
Is going down. The forecasts say
It will be warm with frequent showers.
We ramble down the showery hours
And amble up and down the day.
Mary will wear her black goloshes
And splash the puddles on the town;
And soon on fleets of macintoshes
The rain is coming down, the frown
Is coming down of heaven showing
A wet night coming, the glass is going
Down, the sun is going down.

LOUIS MACNEICE
HAPPY FAMILIES

(A Satirical Lyric)

THE room is all a stupid quietness
Cajoled only by the fire's caress ;
We loll severally about and sit
Severally and do our business severally
For there's a little bit for everybody ;
But that's not all there is to it.

Crusted in sand-stone, while the wooden clock
Places two doctor fingers on his mouth,
We seem fossils in rock
Or leaves turned mummies in drouth
And garnered into a mouldy shrubbery corner
Where the wind has done with us. When we are old
The gardener will use us for leaf mould.

Dutifully sitting on chair, lying on sofa,
Standing on hearth-rug here we are again,
John caught the bus, Joshua caught the train,
And I took a taxi so we all got somewhere.
No one deserted, no one was a loafer,
Nobody disgraced us, luckily for us
No one put his foot in it or missed the bus.

But the wind is a beggar and always
Raps at front door, back door, side door,
In spite of the neat placard that says
'NO HAWKERS HERE' he knocks the more ;
He blows loose paper into petulance

HAPPY FAMILIES

And ruffles the brazier's fiery hair; and once
He caught me suddenly surreptitiously
And left me out of my shell. We'll pass that over
And forget about it and quietly sit
Knitting close, sitting close under cover.

Snuff out the candle for the cap, I think,
Seems to fit, excellently fit.
Te saluto—in a fraction, half a wink—
But that's not all there is to it.

LOUIS MACNEICE
IMPERMANENT CREATIVENESS

THE spider pendulously waits
Stranded in the unroaded air;
The spider's belly-mind creates
Thoroughfare on thoroughfare.

The fatally inquisitive moth
Wakes to ambition with a quiver
Leaves its bed and board of cloth:
Wings of moth go flit and shiver.

And all the time on the window-pane
Shadow fingers of the trees
Wistfully grope and grope again
After the indoor mysteries.

Over asphalt tar and gravel
My racing model happily purrs,
Each charted road I yet unravel
Out of my mind's six cylinders.

Shutters of light, green and red,
Slide up and down. Like mingled cries
Wind and sunlight clip and wed
Behind the canopy of my eyes.

Mothwings burn. Spiders shrivel,
Their bright webs break and cobwebs turn.
Minds burn. Homer's drivels.

Yet all the time on the window-pane
Shadow fingers of the trees
Grove, grope, grope again
After unseen fatalities.

CLERE PARSONS

BY DAY THE GREEN WIND WHICH
STIRS

by day the green wind which stirs,
lady, the tranquil summer, brings
elusion from the breath of wallflowers
and from the pain of fierce geraniums;

but you being firm upon the scented earth,
the wind is but a cloak to wrap you in;
the invisible waves follow but your curves
and while I trace the pattern of sea-gulls

somehow the grace of these accustomed birds
and their suave admirable contempt of time
answer the steady pulse within your heart;
then the alert beauty of your eyes

throws such a flame even in this white day
as will light my tatter'd clumsy mind
towards your soul shining like a sword
close-kept behind the innermost veil of things.

CLERE PARSONS

DANCING

opening and casting a
shutting glance CHARLESTON her
knees, wobbling CHARLESTON her
head i hope she bites CHARLESTON her
tongue. She

(whose gurlfriend? why that one throwing
with such a studied gesture of boredtease
ringS of bluE smokE bedad he's an Aristo
'Wherever the Best
People meet, you
know')

seems strangely to prefer the jew Gayboys

now let's think what shall we throw
what
do

you
think, a
bomb? No let me suggest a Commode

among all these

sleek marionettes whose waste would keep God knows
many a man on more than bread and cheese
and many a better fellow who's out-at-elbows.

CLERE PARSONS

ENGLISH WINTER-PIECE

the s t a r k country which flies against us is
indigo darkness and sharp cold
the mauve banks and the dull jade
are now night's starred and inky veil

these boughs which loom within our rays
are bare brown bleaker than old maids
they stretch gawkily above the cross-roads
stiffer than Long John Silver's leg

into pools of dim dark into the vast phleg-
matic
silence

(by us at what peril disturbed)

'RIDE-A-COCK-HORSE' I said—

but I saw beyond the lonely house
ride-like-the-wind a ghostlier horse instead.

C L E R E P A R S O N S

PLAGE DE MIMONDAINE

this

young

Adonis

who with such yellow hair admires
the suavely paced levantine mannequin
'En vacances, aussi, oui, monsieur, au bord de la mer'
'Shall we (He says) since the sun is so hot undress and bathe
over there beyond the dark rocks where
the green facets crinkle into foam,'

hoping to appropriate his fifth this August
VENUS ANADYOMEN—

e which means

rising from the sea (the others all
were giggling blond bathing belles)

because this place is full of moneyed young men
and indolent phallophil idle minded girls.

W. M. PHILLIPS

L'APRÈS-MIDI D'UN FAUNE

C O O L murmurs floating on chromatic winds,
Blue breezes of eternity—
And nervelessly Debussy weaves
The silken skein of phantasy,
And like a fountain in the moon
Rises the semblance of a tune.

And notes like white yachts dipping in the sea
Thrill into sudden ecstasy,
While in their wake the track of song
Is glistening with melody,
And crystal pools of limpid sound
Well up like springs from underground.

Thin wisps of silver thought are puffed away
Too soon to catch with hearing,
And gleaming ghosts of tune they sway,
Like summer swallows veering,
Between the coolest eaves of song
And pools that have lain silent long.

BRIAN ROBERTS

SONNET

T ELL me in truth, since you and I must part
before the rays of this bright sun decline,
whether I have your love, as you have mine,
or tread the merest threshold of your heart,
unwelcome, unrewarded: for the smart
of absence then would be an anodyne,
or firm faith's so enchanted countersign
that Doubt in vain would hurl his voiceless dart.

And yet I care not, though your silence mean
you are indifferent to my heart's blood flowing:
for to have known you is enough, and knowing
life cannot be as if love had not been,
shall I seek blindness now that I have seen,
shall I not reap where I took joy in sowing?

BRIAN ROBERTS

THE NEW JERUSALEM

SAPPHIRE and gold were dear to Solomon,
and stately cedar brought from Lebanon.
(Fierce ferro-concrete blares, On, Woolworth, on!)
'Let hand forget its skill and heart its pride:
how can we sing in a strange land?' they cried.
(Joyce seeks, where he has dropped it down a drain,
The collar-stud of his genius—in vain.)
Isaiah dreamed dreams, and Ezekiel
saw cherubim flame wheel on fiery wheel.
(Libido misdirected, must avoid
the sexual complexes explained by Freud.)
Chaldean captains of Aholibah
feature on hoardings from America!
Aholah's crimes are now thought merely silly
except by police patrolling Piccadilly.

'Salvation!' shouts the major, 'hear His word!'
(My tent is in Jerusalem, saith the Lord.)

FREDERICK G. ROBERTS

WHITE, WHITE IVORY

‘**A**T a reckless speed,
On a jet black steed,
I bore the ring
Of a Savage King
To the Lord of a land
Where cedars stand,
By a castle tall of ivory.
In a colonnade,
To a little maid
In a robe of white
On a starless night,
I gave the ring
Of the Savage King
In the castle tall of ivory.
At break of day,
I rode away,
Without the ring
Of the Savage King,
And saw her stand,
With waving hand,
On the battlements of ivory.’

‘The Savage King
Asked for his ring.
To a scowling black
Said—“Bring the rack,
And let him feel
The pleasant wheel!”
And so I died.

WHITE, WHITE IVORY

They say she cried,
In the cedar shade
Near the colonnade
Of the palace all of ivory,
And so, farewell mortality!’

NIGEL MALTBY ROBINSON
THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

AS I came through the desert
thus it was
as I came through the desert
in the stars the pale reflections
of my light
wind
felt through the corn
with fingers of my own and

I saw the trees
their petticoats rustling down I saw
they had legs thin and wizened
The old women
had nothing of importance to tell me—
brookbubbling platitudes (but you
go on for ever)

I heard a song
that you never sang.

When I have done
with stars and sun
then
the sheep I clothed
in crinolines, the bees
I shod with gold
shall stand agape with friendly eyes
the stars in frenzy wheel and
the hills like pigs
curl up their tails

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

(the hedges on their flanks
shall writhe like snakes)
and gallop about my heels.

I shall not let her be taken. Oh
so carefully timorous
with fixed intent and moves
curiously contrived plans

ingenious I'll build
a house to place her in
to carry like a snail
upon my back carefully, oh
so fearfully and to hold
strange presents
brought by eyes and ears
in this house
she shall sit carefully on her
chair as I look
or move with circumspection
lest sight or motion soil her dress
or knock against my presents
frail as glass
or hurt myself brittle
like biscuit
or lest my house of cards collapse.

In this house
none shall enter or disturb
for this
is the house that Jack built.

NIGEL MALTBY ROBINSON
STILL TALL CHIMNEY STACKS

STILL tall chimney stacks
break softly into blossom and
the moon's great bunch of yellow
roses wilts and
still sings fire still
steel bones giggle and jibe and
still hot breath of steel
in amorous lungs can catch.

J. M. ROSS

SHABBINGTON WOOD

SHABBINGTON Wood in early May
would make the saddest spirit gay:
primroses there are sprinkled round
like drops of perfume on the ground.
Thick clustered bluebells offer nigh
their watery brightness to the eye;
and underneath the screening trees
sparkle the white anemones.
There through a flower-bejewelled glade
I wandered in the summer shade,
while wrens and blackcaps whistled loud
their challenge to the feathered crowd.

The sunlight through the branches streamed;
so fair the merry woodland gleamed,
I needed not to reckon twice—
the place was nature's Paradise. . . .
Till suddenly a bush I spied,
a gibbet foul, where side by side
dead jays and sparrow-hawks were slung
and crows and stoats and weasels hung,
all by the jealous keeper slain
his weakly pheasants to maintain,
slain that this garden might be filled
with birds that must themselves be killed.
Through the gay trees I took my way
but sadness on my spirit lay,
for nature's Wardens of the wood
were slain to foster human food.

E. J. SCOVELL

ANGELS CARVED IN THE CHURCH
ROOF

A THOUSAND years above this pool of song
Lost angels hang, caught in the vaulted space,
And feel the choir's sweet wailing brush their face,
And dews of prayer drawn up from the dark throng.
Blunt and mild are their faces. Time so long
And music with many waves have smoothed the stone,
That now they dream in a long monotone,
Numbed and remote, the incense clouds among.
They have forgotten the bright air of Heaven,
And the beauty clear and piercing like a sword,
And plains of night, cold between the stars' embers.
Yet sometimes when my master plays, up even
To their still heights blows the wind of a chord,
And the stone feathers stir, and the heart remembers.

W. M. SPACKMAN

LINES TO BE CUT UPON A
TORTOISE

PROGRESSIVE Beast!
That o'er the beachy Earth
Walk'st in persistent pause,
How do we venerate thy girth!
How, thine imponderable Laws!
Sure in thy shell thou hast more wit
Than by enlargement out of it.
How there serener thou than men:
One little World apart from this,
At first, a dwelling; then
To thee a hatchment is;
And last, a tomb.

STEPHEN SPENDER

QUIXOTE ON TIME

TIME is a thing
That does not pass through boredom and the wish-
ing,
But must be fought with, rushed at, over-awed,
And threatened with a sword.
For that prodigious voyager the mind
Another self doth find
At each hour's stage; and, riven, hewed, and wrought,
Cannot foretell its port.
Let heart be dumb, shut close the whining eyes,
And work or drink or sleep, till life defies
Minute, month, hour, or day
Which are harrowed, and beaten, and scared right
away.

STEPHEN SPENDER

VOYAGE

WE travellers are like plants that clutch the sun,
Trail hands into the air, and drink its mead
Down to cool earth, thrusting to hidden roots
Its warm transparency.
Our brains are maps
Where all the world is tracked with thin red lines
As evidence of love:
A line thrust out
Denotes a voyage in Asia,
A network
Cocooning the Pacific shows
How our hearts' treasures are dreams,
Vague memories of travel;
Huge monstrous sea-delights
Are lovers:
Less prehensile, but more ambitious
We hold an almost poet's storehouse
Of prodigies.
O let me go then
From this world of fleshly contact,
Of childish eating, clasping, and touching,
To those truer realities
Of the eyes and mind.

ANTHONY THORNE

SONNET:

'How can I bring you treasures that have lain.'

HOW can I bring you treasures that have lain
In others' hearts, or blush, or sigh, or soften
My tongue to words, not that I should profane,
But that I, foolish, have profaned so often?
How can I say 'I love'? Yet love, like flowers,
Breathes a mute poetry into the air
Which gilds the landscape and perfumes the hours,
Quickens our senses till we are aware
That there's infinity in our hands' touch
Which turns each minute to a Golden Age;
And though my silence is a heritage
Of pagan days, yet all my dreams are such
As children dream, so that I cannot guess
The youth or age of such strange happiness.

GEOFFREY TILLOTSON

THE NUDE WORDSWORTH

(Prophecy for S.E.)

BODY, be still; let breathing pulse faint sound,
Alone intemperate working of the flesh;
Hold the hands' motion, and impose afresh
Seals on the eyelids ever lifting found.
Blood in the lids, transparent, darkly veils
As shines the westering sun eastwards to where
I sit enwrapt in quiet cloth of air
And drink the skies where lighted evening sails.

Counterfeit trunks of trees, and as a log
Be felled to heavy wakefulness in the grass;
Let spiders sprinkle their travelling on your skin,
Nor with a foot explode a brooding frog.
The earth will drop her favours like amber in
The heart that feels the composite hours pass.

GEOFFREY TILLOTSON

A CANARY TRAVELLING
PASSENGER

LE A N as a tulip and shapen so
Is the dainty breast on its parted stem,
And ducking, flashing in witty show
Are head and wings and the light on them.

Gilded wires entomb the air,
Pranked by a lady's petting hand,
And eyes too beady for despair,
Too shallow ever to understand,

Dart wild appeal and brilliant fear,
Incessant glittering of pain
Above a throat too sleek to bear
The songless dactyls of the train.

GEOFFREY TILLOTSON

SONG

OH, lovers use old devices
To gain a woven dell
Where chance no foot entices
To tread their fancy's knell.

And seldom is pleasure nearer
Than many woods away,
Be likings never clearer,
And lookings ne'er so gay.

But here are rocks for shelter,
And the gleaming shade of trees
Begins to dull and welter
Its evening images.

Here be our love's true quarters,
With prying but of birds,
Where scandal-mongering waters
Gabble no human words.

SHOLTO WATT

FOR ONE STRICKEN IN THE MIDST
OF REJOICING

WE shall remember, loveliness,
When you were dead to all the world
How all the light there was lay curled
Among your hair against dark nothingness.

Sleeping, you seemed the death of laughter
There is no smiling when your eyes are closed
And in your kisses there is truth, none after,
Happiness in your body, posed
To dance and walk: when you lie still
Our eyes stop moving, close with yours and mourn
That day that sickens soon as you are ill,
All our new joys and yours that die unborn.

SHOLTO WATT

POEM ON SPRING

DAWN slides unnoticed from the marsh
And wipes with cotton wool
The darkness off the skies. . . .
Will you remember when you, too, are old
That dawn, that rose up silver gold
Across the skies satirical and cold?
Will you remember also in the streets
Like blank canals
Between the prison walls
The words you spoke?
'I think she's awfully good in her new show.'
Why are your eyes like silent streams in flow
Why, when you talk, are you
A glorious Psyche adding up accounts?

As you spoke on I thought my thoughts of you,
'You are the distance to yourself:
The stars are milestones on the way.
Through the steel corridors of time
My footsteps ring your name.
With you and apart from you I watch
Space corkscrew into Life—
All things must needs renew their birth
And in the giddy swift descent
I see the stars disintegrate
To shower the palace halls and rooms
Of you, who are yourself your home.'

POEM ON SPRING

This from your eyes
And from the new born breeze;
These the first thoughts of my new blossoming love.
But you poor dear, you could not feel the Spring;
 you said,
'The Spring is coming late this year.'